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Middle East
News

Tuesday, September 05, 2006 11:44:20 AM (IST) UAE : DOOR DELIVERY OF POSTAL MAIL LIKELY IN DUBAI SOON

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NEWS FROM THE U.A.E.
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Door delivery of postal mail likely in Dubai soon

DUBAI — 05 Sept: Door to door delivery of postal mail in the emirate may not be a distant dream for Dubai residents. A proposal to introduce the system was discussed at a high-level meeting organised by the Roads and Transport Authority (RTA) at the Dubai Municipality headquarters yesterday.

Those attending the meeting discussed the feasibility of a new postal address system with other relevant public sector departments including Etisalat, Empost, Dubai Electricity and Water Authority, Dubai Police and Civil Defence. RTA proposed a new public address system which will enable residents to receive mail and utility bills etc. at their doorstep. Under the proposed new system, all name plates on buildings across the emirate will have to specify the specific building number, community number and street number.

According to Badar Al Siri, RTA's Traffic Department Director and Chairman of Road Naming and Numbering Project Committee, the new public address system would be introduced soon.

"We have covered about 70 per cent of the emirate already by giving numbers and names for streets and buildings. We are currently working to cover the rest of the areas. The new system will be good for residents as well as companies. This will help the companies to trace the correct spot of the residents thus both parties to save time," he said.

"Currently, in case of emergency Dubai Police and Civil Defence is using the addressing system which is provided by us. The new addressing system will help them to reach the right spot without relying on neighbouring land marks. This can help to save time in emergency situations," he pointed out.

"We are also in discussion with Etisalat and Dubai Electricity and Water Authority to make it mandatory to specify the building number and street names instead of P.O. Box numbers when residents apply for their services," he disclosed.

"We are in touch with property developers including Emaar and Nakheel to co-operate with us to name and number their buildings," he added.

KHALEEJ TIMES

Residents must learn addresses

Dubai: 05 Sept: Do you know your home or office address?

If not, it is advisable you learn it because you will need it while dealing with public and private sector organisations in future.

"We want residents to know their addresses, as we want them to shift from the landmark based address system to the proper address system," said Bader Al Siri, Director of the Traffic Department at the Roads and Transport Authority (RTA).

The RTA, in collaboration with Dubai Municipality, has launched a campaign to ensure that everyone in the city knows his or her house and office address.

This includes building number, road or street name and and most importantly community number. People should start using it because the system is already in place.

"We have started interacting with the public sector asking them to implement the address system while dealing with their customers," Al Siri said.

Members of a committee comprising officials from the RTA and the Municipality held a meeting with officials from Dubai Police, Civil Defence, Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing, Dubai Electricity and Water Authority, and the Emirates Post.

"We have informed them to start taking the full addresses of people they are dealing with and introduce this system in their departments as well instead of just using the post box number," he said.

The committee will hold its next meeting with banks and property developers and then meet courier companies to make them aware of the importance of using the proper addresses instead of just using post box numbers.

Banks customers will also be asked to give their full home addresses and courier companies will also be asked to ensure the full address is on the parcels.

Al Siri said they are working on plans to ensure mail delivery at the doorsteps instead of people going to the post offices to collect their mail.

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The project for the comprehensive address system including building numbers, road and street names and numbers and the community numbers stated in early 1980s.

"So far we have covered some 69 per cent of the city area. We will cover 20 per cent more in 2006 and 2007 and some more areas in 2008. It is an ongoing process as the city is expanding and the new areas will be covered as they are developed," he said.

There are currently 129 communities in Dubai and nine sectors. The comprehensive address system is in place in 79 communities.

"We are having meetings with developers of the free hold properties and want them to have an address system in place following guidelines from the RTA," Al Siri said.

In order to make the system even simpler, the RTA will install new signs on buildings, showing the building number, street number and the community number.

Currently, the signs on buildings contains only the building number.

Resident awareness being raised

Campaigns are being launched to make residents and tourists aware of the address system in the city.

There will be educational campaigns in schools and public and private sector organisations. New brochures will be prepared to make people understand how to find their houses or offices, and how they should tell visitors about their addresses.

GULF NEWS

Bachelors cry foul over eviction from apartments in Abu Dhabi

ABU DHABI — 05 Sept: Bachelors in Abu Dhabi are crying out aloud asking for help following their eviction from apartments, their inability to find alternative accommodation and refusal of authorities to bail them out.

They have been compelled to make the streets and parks their home after the Municipality and the Department of Social Services and Commercial Buildings (DSSCB) refused to accommodate them. Even building watchmen and owners are showing them the door as they say it's available "for family only".

Khaleej Times spoke to a group of young men in front of the DSSCB premises. Hamed Khan, who is a taxi driver said: "All doors are closed in our faces, we are a bunch of bachelors using the skies as our roof at night in public parks where we sleep, and on bus station benches after we failed to find any kind of accommodation in Abu Dhabi no matter how much it costs, and here we are in front of the department of commercial buildings, which is the authority responsible for providing accommodation for the people, as it manages rents in Abu Dhabi, but officials told us that they have nothing for us and they will never rent us any residential unit."

His colleague Nazir Khan continues by saying: "We are really living a serious situation. We and other 20 bachelors were given a notice period of one week by the owner to vacate the apartment, but we were not able to find any alternative apartment, rooms or anything else. This is why we urge officials to consider our situation, as we are employees, labourers, drivers, engineers and salesmen...etc, and officials must provide us with suitable accommodation, or else bachelors will wander the streets, a phenomenon which will threaten the civilised appearance of the Capital (Abu Dhabi) and our ability to resume our jobs."

Khamis Mubarak, who's a UAE national said: "Frankly, the government should force companies and establishments (Public and Private) to provide special accommodations for bachelors away from families, because many families refuse to neighbour with bachelors, who sometimes bother their daughters, which leads sometimes to crimes such as rape or robbery". Mohammad Shah said: "The Municipality inspects buildings and evacuates bachelors who are more than four in one room, we are 12 bachelors who live in one room, and we take turns in watching out for the Municipality's surprise inspections, so as not to get kicked out like others".

Khaleej Times raised this issue with Juma bin Mohammed bin Harmash Al Mansori, Head of the rents section in the department of social services and commercial buildings in Abu Dhabi. He said: "Yes, I said it loud and clear to Khaleej Times, there is no accommodation for bachelors in Abu Dhabi buildings, because families are in need of the few available apartments, in addition to avoiding the problems resulting from families being neighbours with bachelors, as we received several complaints from families about the dangers of having bachelor neighbours when you have daughters and females. Bachelors practice some unfamiliar habits for our society, like walking around wearing shorts and harassing girls, in addition to many unhealthy behaviour, what makes owners demand that the department lease for families only.

Al Mansori added "we refuse to rent houses to bachelors in compliance with the decision of the Abu Dhabi Municipality, which bans the rent for bachelors in buildings that contains families".

Mohammed Abdullah Al Basous, Deputy Manager of the rents section (Department of commercial buildings in Abu Dhabi) said "we always receive complains from families about bachelors, and most of these complaints are sensitive topics that we are working to keep away from our society, and we think that the decision of not allowing bachelors to rent in Abu Dhabi is the right decision, but it should be coupled with compelling companies and establishments to build residential compounds outside the city for their bachelor employees, likewise the compounds that already exist in Musaffah and Al Shahama, such projects are the best solution for the bachelors' accommodation problem".

The government should work more on providing these compounds with the needed facilities and affordable rents and transportation, to attract bachelors to live in such compounds. This is the best way to solve this problem once and for all, Al Basous added.

KHALEEJ TIMES

Aishwarya, not accident blocks traffic on Shaikh Zayed Road

DUBAI — 05 Sept: Motorists commuting through the service road parallel to Shaikh Zayed Road near Shangri-La Hotel had a tough time yesterday facing road blocks at regular intervals during the day created by a commercial film shoot starring former Miss world and Bollywood heart-throb Aishwarya Rai.

According to motorists they were forced to wait for a long time as the roads were closed at regular intervals resulting in chaos and traffic congestion. The traffic jam was also felt on the Shaikh Zayed Road from Dubai to Jebel Ali owing to motorists slowing down to catch a glimpse of the Indian film icon.

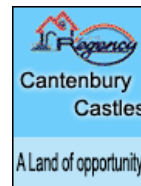
"I went over to Crowne Plaza Hotel for lunch. But, when I came out of the hotel after lunch, I had to wait for about an hour to enter into Shaikh Zayed road as there was a big traffic block," said Afras Muhammed, a motorist, adding, he realised later that the block was created by the advertisement film shoot.

Although, police were there throughout the day controlling the traffic, but the jam took the toll on motorists frustrated to reach their destinations on time.

The news of Aishwarya spotted on a street spread like wild fire and hundreds of fans thronged the scene. According to a Press statement, Aishwarya was acting on an advertising film made for Lux International.



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KHALEEJ TIMES

Alleged ban on Indian mutton leads to confusion

UAE - 05 Sept: The ongoing Indian mutton shortage has led to confusion among meat traders, with many different ideas put forward as the cause of the problem.

"There is huge demand for mutton in the UAE and other Gulf countries during Ramadan. The current shortage is artificially created by a group of local traders," said an official of Manama Hypermarkets and Supermarkets.

A butcher from Esa Meat Trading in Bur Dubai, which sells Indian mutton for Dh17 per kg, said: "Every year mutton prices go up during Ramadan. Now, I feel the big traders are trying to jack up the price," he added.

One leading importer of meat to the Gulf, said last week the Indian Government had banned the export of buffalo meat on the bone to help promote the marketing of the boneless variety – and inadvertently mutton had also come under the ban.

And Indian Embassy sources said the ban was effected on the advice of the World Organisation of Animal Health – in order to control the spread of foot and mouth disease.

However, other traders gave contradictory reasons for the shortage.

Saju V Varghese, the sales manager for Farm Fresh, a leading mutton trader, said: "The ban is by Dubai Municipality, which is controlling the sale of bone-in meat. The ban is not necessarily on Indian mutton. We hope the shortage will be over soon." Dubai Municipality, however, denied it was involved. "We have not received any reports about the Indian mutton. We are not involved in any way in the ban or the shortage," said Khalid Sharief, Assistant Director of Public Health Department and Head of Food Control Section.

EMIRATES TODAY

Middle East travellers skip the US in favour of Europe

UAE - 05 Sept: Diplomatic officials say European destinations are attracting more and more Middle Eastern visitors who – for business, education or leisure – would rather travel to Europe than the United States.

"We are seeing large increases in travel to Germany. Everybody has been really happy in the way they are treated," said Ursula Rommerskirchen, vice consul of the visa section for the German Consulate General in Dubai.

She said the office processes 120 to 150 applications per day, and is anticipating visa requests from the UAE to reach 35,000 this year, from 30,000 last year.

While a lot of this surge can be attributed to the World Cup, Rommerskirchen said medical, tourist and education travel to Germany from the GCC is on the rise.

"I think we are already seeing more student applications and applications for medical treatment in Germany. The UAE has discovered Munich as its second home," she said.

According to statistics of the British Embassy in Dubai, August 2006 witnessed a 90 per cent surge in the number of visa requests to Britain to 6,000 during the month, from 3,150 in the same month during 2005.

The trend comes as Arab business and student travellers contend they face unfair discrimination at airports in the United States.

UAE National student Saif Khalifa Al Sha'ali, 26, recently said he would not return to America to complete his doctorate programme after being detained in a Los Angeles airport and sent back to the UAE, along with his young family.

He said he would complete his studies in Western Europe to avoid similar treatment.

Hilary Olsin-Windecker, a spokesperson for the US Embassy in the UAE, said examples like these are the exception rather than the rule.

"The point is that there are 600,000 foreign students in the US, and 77,000 are from the Arab World.

"A few people might have problems but the vast majority do not," she said.

Still, one Dubai-based financial executive said that in terms of holiday and business purposes "Arabs are avoiding the US as an option at all costs".

"There is too much arrogance. Whatever Arab people can do without travelling to the US, they will do." Another Dubai Government employee said Europe also falls under the banner of "areas to avoid" for Arabs, particularly male travellers.

"I changed my travel habits three years back and now I usually spend my vacations in Asia," said the official, who had just returned from a family trip from Thailand.

"I thought it is better to go to Asian countries because you feel that they accept you more. You do not feel like you are criminals until proven innocent, which is the case in Europe." He added that as travel regulations to European countries become far more stringent in the wake of the foiled terrorist plot in Britain, many Arab families, business people and students alike will rethink their travel plans in the near future.

EMIRATES TODAY

Transport for staff the only way to reduce traffic jams

UAE - 05 Sept: ON THE first day of the academic year, the roads of all the UAE witnessed too many traffic jams. Frankly, the traffic movements were very smooth in the last few months, despite a few traffic jams here and there.

The question is why did the authorities not make any plans to tackle the situation before the beginning of the academic year?

The traffic jam in the past three days reflected the need for comprehensive solutions to the problem, and such solutions should not be temporary.

We are in favour of each company providing mass transport for its employees, instead of people using their own cars to get to work. Such a solution will be very effective in reducing the number of cars on the roads.

Therefore, we call upon the authorities to seriously take note of this suggestion to ease the problems of commuters.

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